

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2771

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: SHUM GT NU ELAB

SUBJECT: CONGRESSIONAL INQUIRY ABOUT TRADE UNIONISTS

REF: STATE 204270

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. SUMMARY: REPORTS RECEIVED BY CONGRESSMAN FRASER THAT THREE TRADE UNIONISTS WERE ARRESTED AND BEATEN IN GUATEMALA IN JUNE ARE CORRECT, BUT ALL HAVE SINCE BEEN RELEASED AND HAVE RETURNED TO THEIR POSITIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. CONGRESSMAN FRASER'S INQUIRY (REFTEL) REFERS TO INCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED JUNE 25. ACCORDING TO VARIOUS EMBASSY SOURCES, POLICE ARRESTED NICARAGUAN TRADE UNIONIST, DONALD CASTILLO, ON COMPLAINT BY JEWELRY STORE OWNER THAT HE STOLEN SOME JEWELRY. CASTILLO WAS IN GUATEMALA ON VISIT TO NATIONAL WORKERS CENTER (CNT), GUATEMALA'S CHRISTIAN LABOR CONFEDERATION AFFILIATED TO CLAT. CASTILLO, REPORTEDLY ON PRETEXT OF LEADING POLICE TO JEWELS, TOOK THEM TO CNT HEADQUARTERS. SINCE POLICE ALLEGEDLY HAD NO WARRANT FOR CASTILLO'S ARREST, A LEGAL REQUIREMENT FREQUENTLY NOT OBSERVED, CNT PERSONNEL PRESENT REFUSED TO ALLOW POLICE TO REMOVE CASTILLO FROM CNT OFFICES. SOME SHOTS WERE REPORTEDLY

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PAGE 02 GUATEM 05812 191403Z

FIRE. POLICE REINFORCEMENTS WERE CALLED AND A POLICE

VEHICLE WAS USED TO BREAD DOWN DOOR OF CNT OFFICE. POLICE THEN ARRESTED CASTILLO ALONG WITH ISMAEL BARRIOS, CNT ORGANIZATION SECRETARY, AND ADAN ESTRADA, A CNT MESSENGER. MIGUEL ANGEL ALBIZURES, CNT'S LEADER, FLED AND WARRANT FOR HIS ARREST WAS ISSUED.

3. ON JULY 12 ALL CHARGES AGAINST THREE ARRESTED UNIONISTS WERE DROPPED AND THEY WERE RELEASED. PRESS REPORTED THAT CASTILLO WAS ORDERED DEPORTED, A COMMON PROCEDURE IN CASES AGAINST FOREIGNERS IN WHICH CHARGES ARE DROPPED OR ACCUSED IS FOUND INNOCENT.

4. TWO DAYS LATER ALBIZURES, ACCOMPNIED BY SEVERAL LAWYERS AND FLOCK OF PRESS REPORTERS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS, SURRENDERED HIMSELF. HE WAD RELEASED ON JULY 19, BUT SUBJECT TO BEING RECALLED. END UNCLASSIFIED

5. COMMENT: WHILE CNT IS MOST VOCAL CRITIC OF GOG LABOR POLICIES, WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT INCIDENT WAS FABRICATED EFFORT TO HARRASS THEM. FACT THAT ALL EX-CEPT ALBIZURES WERE BEATEN WHILE IN CUSTODY, ACCORDING TO REPORT FROM PROMINENT TRADE UNIONIST WITH CLOSE TIES TO CNT, IS HARDLY UNUSUAL PRACTICE FOR GUATEMALAN POLICE, PARTICULARLY SINCE THEY RESISTED ARREST. IMPRESSION WE RECEIVED FROM OUR UNIONIST SOURCE IS THAT MALTREATMENT WAS NOT RPT NOT SEVERE. TWO GUATEMALANS HAVE SINCE RETURNED TO THEIR CNT POSITIONS, AND NOTHING REGARDING MISTREATMENT HAS APPEARED IN PRESS. WE PLAN TO TALK TO ALBIZURES DIRECTLY AT EARLY DATE.
ANDREWS

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